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ABSTRACT

A study investigated ways of establishing links between different methods of reading instruction, children's conceptualizations of the reading process, and children's actual reading behavior. Two instruments were used to assess the relationships between the three variables: a revised version of "The Reading Miscue Inventory" and "The Reading Interview." Subjects were selected from third grade students from three schools in Melbourne, Australia, that employed separate teaching methods based on three different theoretical models of reading: (1) a decoding approach using "Words in Color," (2) a skills approach in a basal reader, and (3) a language approach using the language experience method. Although the two measures used were found to have a number of limitations, it appeared that there were certain observable differences worth investigation. Noticeable differences arose in children's retellings: children from the language based school tended toward slightly higher retelling scores despite lower scores in other areas, and able readers from the decoding school also had high retelling scores. Interview results indicated that, except for a few children, most were unable to discuss fully their understandings of learning to read, levels of competence, or the pedagogy used. (MKM)

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OBSERVING THE EFFECTS OF READING INSTRUCTION

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This paper reports some attempts to determine the means of establishing the links between different methods of reading instruction, children's conceptualization of the reading process and children's actual reading behaviour. It is a report of our observations on the sensitivity and suitability of two different instruments in highlighting the relationships between the three variables mentioned. The instruments in question were a revised version of the Reading Miscue Inventory (Goodman & Burke 1976) and The Reading Interview, (Burke & Harste, 1976). Thus, we were interested in two different issues. These were:

(1) The usefulness of the measures in detecting differences among readers and

(2) The kind of differences that exist between readers.

The history of the long and often bitter debate over reading pedagogy has been documented by Chall (1967), Mathews (1966) and Davies (1973). The conflicting claims of rival pedagogies have been difficult to assess. When Chall examined the research evidence relating to these claims she found that the data consisted of scores or values tabulated under eight outcome

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variables (Chall, p.104). These were:

word pronunciation (words read from a list)

connected oral reading ability (accuracy of oral reading)

phonics (letter, sound correspondences)

spelling (tested by dictation)

vocabulary (knowledge of word meanings)

silent reading, comprehension (usually measured by multiple choice tests)

rate of reading

interest/fluency/expression (Chall held that this cluster of variables could be treated under the one head as there was a high degree of commonality between each variable).

Most of these variables arise consequentially from the construction of the standardised reading tests used to generate the data. The studies reviewed by Chall used values on all or some of these variables to compare the achievement of children who had received different kinds of reading instruction. It can be seen that much depends upon the construct validity of the sub-tests which produced these values. Farr (1969, p.7) points out a serious problem for reading measurement when the sub-tests of reading test batteries have doubtful validity. He suggests (p.9), that emerging psycholinguistic models of reading might lead to a more solid base for reading test construction.

Miscue analysis, developed by K.S. Goodman (see Allen and Watson, 1976) from such a base, is a technique in which a reader's observed deviations from a text while reading orally are examined against the expected response under a number of headings derived from psycholinguistic theory. The procedure has developed in parallel with a theory of reading and has been used to explore a variety of theoretical and pedagogic issues. By virtue

of the detailed profile the technique provides for both individuals and groups of readers, it has been used to describe the differences in reading strategies employed by different readers. Goodman K. and Burke (1968) used miscue analysis to describe the reading of fourth and fifth grade proficient readers. Page (1970) used miscue analysis to study the effects of increased difficulty of texts within the same readers. Sims (1972) compared the miscues of readers who read stories in either their own dialect or in Standard English to determine the role dialect plays in the reading process. Rousch (1972) used miscue analysis and cloze procedure to compare the oral and silent reading performance of children who had been judged to have high or low conceptual development in relation to the text being read. Thornton (1973) and Ryan (1979) used miscue analysis to determine the strategies used by readers set different purposes for reading, and Goodman K. & Goodman Y. (1978) used miscue analysis to explore the reading strategies employed by readers from various low status dialect minority groups in the United States. Ewoldt (1976) used a variant of miscue analysis similar to the form used in the present study to investigate the differences in reading performance between children involved in a Follow Through program with children not involved in the program. Ewoldt found that grade three readers under different instructional regimes tended to perform similarly on many of the aspects of reading analysed by miscue analysis but differed significantly on correction strategies and in aspects of their retelling of stories. Thus, while the bulk of miscue studies have tended to confirm that all readers make more or less efficient use of the same process in reading there is often a significant variation in the kind of reading miscues made between groups of readers. On this basis it was deemed reasonable to explore the use of miscue analysis as a technique for determining the differential effects of varieties of reading instruction.

The Reading Miscue Inventory (Goodman Y. and Burke, 1972) is a shortened form of the full miscue taxonomy (see Allen and Watson, 1976) normally used for research purposes. It is used in classrooms principally as an evaluative instrument. In the R.M.I. a reader orally reads a complete text and is told that he/she will need to retell all that can be remembered of the text when the reading is finished. The reader's oral response is then compared with the response predicted by the text.

Text: But although they never tired of envying their friend and marvelling at her good fortune.....

Any unexpected response or deviation from the text is defined as a miscue and is evaluated in terms of its graphic and sound similarity with the text. The grammatical function of the miscue is compared with the function of the text and judgements are made about the grammaticality, semantic acceptability and degree of meaning change involved in the miscue. A minimum of twenty five miscues are coded and analysed.

The retelling which follows the oral reading is scored in a prescribed way and the retelling score is used to qualify the profile produced by the pattern of misuces.

In the version of the R.M.I. used in these observations (Goodman and Burke, 1976) several revisions have been made to increase the ease of administration and coding. Greater emphasis has been given to the reader's retelling and changes have been made to its scoring. For example, where the original version differentiated Character Analysis into Recall of names and character (15 points) and Development (15 points) the later version suggests Character Development (40 points) as the heading, allowing the investigator to allocate the points among the characters but giving fairly detailed directions as to what should be considered.

Decisions on the child's use of the syntactic and semantic information system are now based on a maximum of seventy-five sentences. If the particular story has less than seventy-five sentences then all sentences are coded. The grammaticality of the reader's performance is assessed on the basis of the grammaticality of each sentence after any miscues have been corrected. (In the earlier version each miscue was judged for grammaticality on the role that the miscue played in the sentence in which it occurred). Data on correction strategies, the child's use of grapho-phonemic information and grammatical function now rely on only twenty-five miscues.

While valid measures of reading performance are essential in determining the effects of instruction upon performance some research suggests that conceptualization of the task may be correlated with performance. Reid (1966), Downing (1970), Clay (1972) and Francis (1973) have reported on the conceptual opacity of the reading task for young children. Clay, in particular, has pointed out how a developing conscious awareness of the process seems to be highly correlated with success at learning to read (Clay, 1972, p.24 ff.). Harste & Burke (1977) have suggested that the learning reader's emerging concepts of reading are determined by the theoretical assumptions underlying the instruction being received. That is, they assert that learning to read is influenced by the theoretical assumptions of the process held by the reader. The Reading Interview is devised as an instrument to tap the level of conceptualization a reader has about the reading process. Eight open-ended questions explore the reader's perception of the nature of the reading task and their own participation in the task so as to provide a means of identifying these theoretical orientations to reading held by a reader.

It has often been assumed that teaching methods are devised on the basis of a set of theoretical assumptions about the task to be taught and the process by which the task will be learned. Often these assumptions are implicit in the organization of materials and experiences, less often they are explicitly stated. It is widely accepted that one such set of assumptions can be classified as representing a decoding approach. (See Chall, p.342; Fries, p.131; Gibson & Levin, (1965) p.131). The key assumptions behind this approach are:

i) Written language is an alphabetically coded form of speech.

ii) Reading involves the substitution of speech sounds for the alphabetic symbols. In the case of mature silent reading this is done sub-vocally.

iii) The beginning reader must learn to associate speech sounds with the appropriate spelling symbols.

A second set of theoretical assumptions have been described by Harste and Burke, (1977) as representing a skills model of reading. This approach assumes:

i) Understanding written language involves the recognition of words.

ii) Word recognition is a complex skill made up of an ability to recognize some words "on sight" and skills which can be applied to recognize other words.

iii) Mastery of these skills is essential for successful reading and direct instruction will be more effective than incidental learning.

Samuels (1976) argues for a skills approach to reading although it should be noted that he believes that the skill training should be initially focused on letter identification. The key distinction between the skills model and the decoding model lies in the fact that the decoding model assumes that the goal of reading instruction is the transformation of print into sound. The skills model asserts that this is merely one of many skills to be mastered.

The third set of assumptions identified by Harste and Burke (1977) is not distinguished by Chall (1967) (although she does speak of a 'meaning emphasis' approach she means to include many of the teaching practices that Harste and Burke class as exemplifying a skills approach).

The third theoretical model is characterised by the following assumptions:

i) Reading is a language activity which is dominated by the reader's need to construct a satisfactory meaning.

ii) In constructing meaning a reader uses a number of information sources, some are present in the text and others are derived from the reader's own knowledge.

iii) Use of these sources of information cannot be taught in isolation from the act of reading. (Subscribers to this view hold that the component parts of the reading process cannot be abstracted from the process itself.

Detailed resumes of this position can be found in Smith (1972; 1978) and Goodman (1977). This set of assumptions about reading and reading instruction will be called a language-based model of reading.

Harste and Burke (1977) have claimed that children develop a particular approach to reading, which is reflected in the way they read and which can be substantially influenced by the kind of instruction received.

Our interest in these questions arose when teaching regimes operating on each of the theroetical paradigms outlined above were identified in use at three primary schools in Melbourne, Australia. Each orientation has been the basis of reading instruction at the respective school for at least four years and it was possible to find a number of grade three children whose reading instruction has been consistently informed by one of these orientations.

The actual approaches representing these orientations are:

Words in Colour (1968): decoding orientation

Happy Venture (1972) Basal reading System : skills orientation

Language experience approach : Language based orientation.

We were able to select a stratified random sample from grade three at each school. Teachers were asked to provide a rank ordering of children from most able to least able and the sample was selected to provide five children from high, average and low ability levels respectively. Thus fifteen subjects were selected from each program.

Six narrative stories of different difficulty were chosen. Each story was able to be read completely at the one session and was unkown to the reader. The story used for each reader was selected to produce at least twenty five miscues per reader.

Typed copies of the text were prepared to allow each reader's miscues to be marked thus providing a 'script' of what the reader did during the reading.

Coding sheets and retelling guides were prepared in conformity with the instructions given by Goodman Y. and Burke (1976).

Each child was asked to read a story completely. They were told that at the end of the reading they would be asked to retell the story in their own words. They were told that the interviewer would be unable to help them during the reading and that they should do the best they could if they had difficulties. The reading was tape recorded.

Following the reading and the retelling the reader was questioned about points raised in the retelling. No new information was sought. At the conclusion of the questions about the retelling the Reading Interview was administered. The taped readings were transcribed to the typed work sheets and student assistants transcribed the retellings.

The miscues were transcribed from the work sheets to the coding frames and retelling transcripts were scored.

The responses to the interview were coded according to the theoretical orientation they indicate.

Miscue scores were available for individual readers under the following categories:

Readers use of the Semantic System

Readers use of Correction Strategies

Readers use of the Syntactic System

Readers use of the Graphophonic System

Miscues per Hundred Words

A Comprehending Score was ascertained by calculating the percentage of instances the reader produced semantically acceptable sentences and/or corrected semantically unacceptable sentences. Retelling scores were allocated to each reader.

Our underlying assumption was that if reading instruction differences influence reading performance and conceptualizations of the process as Burke and Harste suggest then these influences would show up within our sample, given the suitability of our instruments.

THE USEFULNESS OF THE R.M.I.

In the case of the R.M.I. used in these observations only twenty-five miscues from a child's oral reading are coded. Therefore, if a child has a considerable number of omissions, insertions and alterations in the relationships between clauses then the number of miscues coded for graphic, sound and grammatical function is severely reduced. This sometimes made for insufficient data for adequate judgements on children's use of grapho-phonemic information and prediction of grammatical function, or, at the very least, posed the problem as to whether additional miscues should be coded or not. Many children had 7 or 8 omissions and insertions or more - one child had 14.

Trying to make judgements about a child's correction strategies over twenty-five miscues sometimes caused misgivings. For instance, difficult sentences in otherwise suitable stories produced dense miscues which

then became difficult for the reader to correct.

Text: *Seizing her hair with one hand, he raised his cutlass with the other, and was on the point of slicing off her head. The poor woman turned a dying glance on him and begged for one more instant to prepare herself.*

If this occurs a number of times the figure of 25 miscues can be attained with a few densely miscued sentences. Thus assessment of the particular reader's correction strategies becomes problematic. We might add too, that the Revised R.M.I. does not show unnecessary corrections. Such data could be useful in establishing the links between instruction and reading behaviour.

This isn't to be taken as a criticism of Miscue Analysis, as for research purposes Goodman codes and analyzes fifty miscues (Goodman and Goodman 1978), but it indicates a problem in using a version of miscue analysis designed for classroom evaluation as a research instrument.

Certain other coding strategies failed to offer sufficient detail. This was particularly noticeable in the use of a reading of the whole sentence as a basis for decisions on syntactic and semantic acceptability and meaning change. With the many complex sentences found in a number of stories used in our explorations such a coding technique had limitations. In this technique judgements about syntactic and semantic acceptability are made at the level of the sentence finally produced by the reader. Often a misuce can result in a structure which is acceptable up to, and including the miscue, but which is unacceptable following this miscue. Here are two examples:

(1) Text: *"I don't know," answered the poor woman, paler than death.*

(2) Text: *He took his own daughter out of bed.....*

In the full Goodman research taxonomy and in the earlier version of the R.M.I. these gradations of acceptability can be coded and analysed and so finer, more precise assessments of the reader's use of the grammatical system can be made.

Changes in intonation within and across phrases and sentences would seem to need more careful study than that allowed for by the R.M.I. Such information could be helpful in decisions on the child's use of syntactic and semantic information, especially efficiency in predicting certain syntactical patterns.

Additional data on word omissions and insertions not destructive of meaning and non-word substitutions also appears necessary. Ryan (1979) argues that insertions, for instance, demonstrate the involvement of the reader's own language in a proficient way and are strong evidence of the reader's efficiency. Furthermore, on omissions he states the following:

> "Assuming that a miscue has been judged highly acceptable and not corrected, the further classification of omission provides some evidence that 'the reader is not bound by the graphic array but is drawing on his own language base in the processing of the text'. He is thus efficient, but the evidence is not as remarkable as in the case of the insertion". (p.54)

And, in fact, additional information was sought on the children's omissions. This will be referred to later. With regard to non-word substitutions a full accounting of them may have supplied data of interest.

In relation to the children's retellings a number of problems arose. First a more satisfactory way of assigning relative weightings to aspects of a retelling seems essential. Some children recalled a wealth of detail, but did not retell the significant generalizations; at least as they appeared to the researchers. Other children gave kaleidoscope accounts, that is, somewhat random recountings of events which in terms of a score may be reasonably satisfactory. However, what importance should be placed on sequence or appropriate story logic in a retelling in comparison with a random out-of-sequence retelling? Second, what relative weightings should be given to naming a character and character development? And third, to what extent should a child's retelling be marked down because of misconceptions and elaborations?

Given developments in studies of story grammar (Rumelhart 1975; Mandler & Johnson 1977), propositional analysis (Frederiksen, 1977) and cohesion analysis (Halliday and Hasan, 1976) it would seem that new methods of analyzing retellings in terms of their similarity to, or variation from the original text could be developed.

THE USEFULNESS OF THE READING INTERVIEW

The main difficulty which arose was in coding the children's responses. For example, in answer to the question; "When you are reading and you come to something you don't know, what do you do?" Some children simply said that they tried to work it out, or what was a fairly common response, "I just spell it". Which of the three theoretical models - decoding, skills or language based - are represented through these responses? Further, within which category should these answers be placed?

"By thinking really hard".

"Uhm, I leave it out".

"Ask the teacher".

How does one categorize the response of a child who in answer to the question, who is a good reader that you know, answers in this way:

> "My sister-in-law. My brother and mother, cousin Frank, and ten cousins in Italy"?

Our observations suggest that the ultimate value of the interview relies heavily on the skill of the interviewer, especially in following-up children's initial responses. As it stands, if the interviewer remains too closely tied to the questions supplied then the value of the interview is limited.Suggested follow-up questions could be helpful.

Interview results, in general, indicated that except for a few children most were unable to discuss very fully their understandings of learning to read, levels of competence or the pedagogy used. Most children described reading competence only in terms of overt performance:

> "He can read a lot of books".
>
> "She reads real nice".
>
> "She's in the highest group and she's up to book 14".
>
> (The subject didn't know if he was a good reader or not because he was only up to Book 11).

Fairly gross notions about learning to read were evident:

> "I learnt in a minute".
>
> "I was starting reading in kinder, (1) then came better in prep". (2)
>
> "By myself! I got a book and read it".

Many children believed that their mother was a significant person in helping them read which is probably true enough. Yet, a number of children seemed unaware of the limitations of their own reading ability. Some above average readers thought they were poor at the task and vice-versa. Many children didn't know.

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(1) Pre-school

(2) First year at school - equivalent to an American kindergarten year.

On the other hand, a few individuals from each school were able to articulate practices in keeping with a central philosophy of the school. One child from the language based school had this to say:

> "I make up words in the story that sound all right and what I think it might be".

And from the decoding school comes this detailed and accurate description of the teacher's use of Words in Color:

(Question: Who helped you learn to read?)

> "Mrs. X, she used to bring me down to the charts and then she used to get a ruler and she used to point the thing and then when she'd done it, like, just say I didn't know how to spell "pup"or something like that, she'd point to the "p" and I go "puh" then she'd point to the "u" and I'd go "uh" and then she'd point to the "p" and I'd go "puh" and then I'd go "pup".

(Question: How did you learn to read?)

> "We've got these Words in Colour Charts and then we go "a", "o", "i", "e" and all that stuff, and then there's all these sounds and then when we get to learn the words well we go on to these charts and sounds like "pit", "pat" and that, and then it gets harder each time and every time you get better at it you go onto another "chart".

But what does such a description indicate? To what extent is the child's attitude to reading and her reading competence influenced by her beliefs as to how she learnt to read? In fact, this child's reading achievement, including her level of competence, her comprehension and her attitudes to the task, were all indicative of a superior and sophisticated reader

attending to the author's meaning. Her orientation as measured by the R.M.I. was language-based.

The Reading Interview does provide intriguing information about children and their ideas on reading and its teaching, For our purposes, though, the problem of coding children's responses and the heavy reliance on the interviewer's follow-up probing limited the value of the Interview; given of course, that it is possible for young children to reflect on their own learning processes in a manner which will enlighten adult investigators.

Thus, the two measures used in this exploration were found to have a number of limitations primarily because of the particular demands of our interests. Nevertheless, given the particular limitations of the measures it would still appear that there are certain observable differences worth investigation in a carefully planned future study.

The most noticeable of these differences arise in children's retellings. Children from the language-based school tended towards slightly higher retelling scores despite certain evidence from the R.M.I. data (comprehending scores and syntactical acceptability scores) suggesting that they were less proficient readers. And yet, retelling scores for the skills school children were lower than other data (syntactic and semantic acceptability scores and comprehending scores) would seem to predict.

A further feature was the choice of organizational mode for retellings and in order to categorize these the following modes of retelling were used:

(a) Kaleidoscopic retelling (a random recounting of events).

(b) Total story retelling in sequential order.

(c) Main events retelling in sequential order.

(d) Plot statement followed by total story retelling in sequential order.

(e) Plot statement followed by main events retelling in sequential order (Goodman and Goodman, 1978).

Children from the language based school strongly favoured total story retellings in sequential order whereas retellings by children from the skills and decoding schools contained a greater variety of retelling modes including kaleidoscopic accounts. Thus we have to ask: Do these differences at the retelling level reflect differing perceptions of the reading task by young children and do such differences arise, at least in part, becuase of different instruction?

In the area of correction strategies differences were also observed. Children from the language based school attempted considerably more correction than that which is reported as normal (Cambourne & Rousch, 1980). Though not always successful such attempts may demonstrate a greater awareness of the need to maintain meaning.

Miscue research consistently shows that highly proficient readers make less use of grapho-phonic information than less able readers and in our observations, this was apparent. Proficient readers at the decoding and skills oriented schools made less use of the grapho-phonic system than their less able classmates. And, in the case of the able readers from the decoding school proficiency was also reflected in quality retellings. These readers have learned to ignore the major thrust of their instruction. Yet highly proficient readers from the skills school had relatively low retelling scores.

Other observations reflect similar conflict. For example, at the language based school, omissions not destructive of meaning tended to be higher which according to Ryan's (1979) research may be evidence of reading efficiency. However, as stated previously, certain other miscue data suggested otherwise.

Finally, it was noted that clusters of children from almost all ability groups from all three schools gave some language based responses to The Reading Interview. This and other observations mentioned seem to suggest that the actual instruction given to these children was not so vigorously

oriented in a particular direction as our initial gross categories suggest. In fact our experience suggests that teachers' practices remain divergent and varied despite the theoretical orientation of school policy and teaching materials.

The particular teacher then seems to be the critical influence in the development of children's views about reading and their theoretical orientation. If this is not probable then why the disparate observations on a number of measures amongst children irrespective, often, of ability, group or school?

Given that these observations are reasonable, the most profitable line of inquiry lies not in studying instructional effects through school policy categorization of methods but through the individual teacher's orientation and thence to the effects on children's reading and their perception of the task.

This is not to argue that school policy on reading instruction has no impact but rather that individual teachers influence, arising from his or her particular orientation, is of greater importance. This really confirms the view that the method of instruction accounts for less variability in performance than individual teachers. Our preliminary explorations would suggest that in a well planned study individual teachers should be used as the population from which a sample should be drawn. Future studies should attempt to determine what assumptions particular teachers hold about the reading process and the relationships which exist between these assumptions and observed teaching behaviours. It would be necessary also to identify those kinds of behaviours most likely to influence children's reading. It is possible that there are a number of identifiable "critical contexts" in which teaching practice, and the beliefs about reading which inform it influences the learning of reading by children. Our observations tend to support the contention stated by Harste & Burke (1977) that oral reading

correction strategies employed by young readers may be a product of instruction. One critical context may well arise when teachers listen to children's oral reading and respond to the child's reading miscues. Another critical context, given the variation in retelling style, may lie in the kinds of tasks or demonstrations teachers expect of their students. Thus, student perceptions of the task of reading may arise as a consequence of the typical responses required by their teachers. We suspect that this may be less true for proficient readers than it seems to be for less proficient readers, but a study which explored this possibility would need to control for differences due to different interviewers. That is to say it cannot be discounted that variance in retelling scores and styles is due to sociolinguistic factors at the time of the retelling.

With critical contexts described, and the stated ethnographic observations of individual teachers carried out then the effects of particular teacher's instruction on the children in their care could be observed. At this point, miscue analysis would seem a suitable measure to reflect the differences between readers. Either the full taxonomy or an adaptation with categories designed to explore further the observable differences noted in this paper would assist in the study of the effects of instruction.

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